

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT  
EASTERN DISTRICT OF MISSOURI  
EASTERN DIVISION

RICHARD CLOSSER, )  
                          )  
Plaintiff,            )  
                          )  
v.                     )    No. 4:07CV721 HEA  
                          )  
DIANE McFARLAND, et al., )  
                          )  
Defendants.            )

**OPINION, ORDER AND MEMORANDUM**

This matter is before the Court upon the application of Richard Closser for leave to commence this action without payment of the required filing fee. *See* 28 U.S.C. § 1915(a). Upon consideration of the financial information provided with the application, the Court finds that plaintiff is financially unable to pay any portion of the filing fee. Therefore, plaintiff will be granted leave to proceed in forma pauperis pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1915(a).

**28 U.S.C. § 1915(e)**

Pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e)(2)(B), the Court may dismiss a complaint filed in forma pauperis at any time if the action is frivolous, malicious, fails to state a claim upon which relief can be granted, or seeks monetary relief against a defendant who is immune from such relief. An action is frivolous if "it lacks an arguable basis either in law or in fact." *Neitzke v. Williams*, 490 U.S. 319, 325 (1989). An action fails to state a claim upon which relief may be granted if it appears beyond doubt that the plaintiff can prove no set of facts in support of his claim which would entitle him to relief. *Conley v. Gibson*, 355 U.S. 41, 45-46 (1957); *Jackson Sawmill Co. v. United States*, 580 F.2d 302, 306 (8th Cir. 1978).

In reviewing a pro se complaint under § 1915(e)(2)(B), the Court must give the complaint the benefit of a liberal construction. *Haines v. Kerner*, 404 U.S. 519, 520 (1972). The Court must also weigh all factual allegations in favor of the plaintiff, unless the facts alleged are clearly baseless. *Denton v. Hernandez*, 112 S. Ct. 1728, 1733 (1992); *Scheuer v. Rhodes*, 416 U.S. 232, 236 (1974).

### **The complaint**

Plaintiff, a civilly-committed resident of the Missouri Sexual Offender Treatment Center ("MSOTC"), brings this 42 U.S.C. § 1983 action against defendants Diane McFarland, Ron Dittmore, Felix Vincenz, and the Department of Mental Health. Plaintiff alleges that he has not "been charged with any crimes," and his confinement at MSOTC is unconstitutional. He seeks five trillion dollars in monetary damages and asks "the Court to step in and see to it that [he is] charged for a crime."

To the extent that plaintiff is challenging the constitutionality of Missouri's Sexually Violent Predators Act ("SVPA"), Mo. Rev. Stat. §§ 632.480-513, under which he is involuntarily confined,<sup>1</sup> the Court notes that a favorable ruling on plaintiff's § 1983 claim would necessarily imply the invalidity of plaintiff's current confinement. Habeas corpus, however, is the proper mechanism for an inmate to challenge either the fact or length of his confinement. *See Preiser v. Rodriguez*, 411 U.S. 475, 490 (1973). Even if the Court liberally construed this action as a federal habeas corpus action, there is no indication that plaintiff has previously presented his claims relative to the constitutionality of § 632.480 to a Missouri state court. In the absence of exceptional circumstances, a state prisoner must exhaust currently available and adequate state remedies before invoking federal habeas corpus jurisdiction. *Braden v. 30th Judicial Circuit Court of Kentucky*, 410

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<sup>1</sup>Missouri's SVPA authorizes the civil commitment of "sexually violent predators," persons who suffer from a mental abnormality that makes them more likely to engage in predatory acts of sexual violence if not confined in a secure facility. *See Mo. Rev. Stat. 632.480, et seq.*

U.S. 484 (1973). State remedies are ordinarily not considered exhausted if an individual may effectively present his claim to the state courts by any currently available and adequate procedure.

Moreover, to the extent that plaintiff is seeking damages stemming from his allegedly unconstitutional confinement, the Court notes that a judgment awarding him monetary damages would necessarily call into question the validity of his confinement. Consequently, plaintiff cannot proceed on his damages claim unless and until the judgment finding that he is a sexually violent predator has been reversed or otherwise called into question. *See Heck v. Humphrey*, 512 U.S. 477, 486-87 (1994). For these reasons, the Court will dismiss this action as legally frivolous.

In accordance with the foregoing,

**IT IS HEREBY ORDERED** that plaintiff's motion for leave to proceed in forma pauperis [Doc. #2] is **GRANTED**.

**IT IS FURTHER ORDERED** that plaintiff's motion for appointment of counsel [Doc. #4] is **DENIED** as moot.

**IT IS FURTHER ORDERED** that the Clerk shall not issue process or cause process to issue upon the complaint, because the complaint is legally frivolous and/or fails to state a claim upon which relief may be granted. *See* 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e)(2)(B).

An appropriate order shall accompany this order and memorandum.

Dated this 24th day of April, 2007.



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HENRY EDWARD AUTREY  
UNITED STATES DISTRICT JUDGE